

# Raising the Par on the Grand Strand



by John Brasier

*For decades, the Intracoastal Waterway of the Grand Strand was an almost impenetrable obstacle separating the bustling resort towns of Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach, and their dozens of championship golf courses from the nearly uninhabited timber lands just on the other side. But not anymore. Barefoot Resort and Grande Dunes, a pair of luxury developments on the west bank of the waterway, have built bridges across the water, greatly expanding the area golf map and providing interesting new options for visiting golfers.*

## Barefoot Resort

Barefoot Resort, the first to cross the waterway, made an immediate impact with golfers in 2000, opening courses from world-famous architects Tom Fazio and Pete Dye and player-architects Greg Norman and Davis Love III. The link to civilization is a restored bridge from the North Carolina Outer Banks, which connects the resort to Barefoot Landing—the restaurant, shopping and entertainment complex on the other side.

Homes, hotels, condominiums and villas are planned for the development, which is slated to have a marina, a beach club, an equestrian center and a village with cafes and restaurants. But that's in the future. For now, the golf courses are the focal point of the development.

The courses are distinctly different from each other. The Dye course, the only layout expected to eventually become private, is long and difficult. The Fazio tract features the architect's trademark eye-catching contouring while twisting through wild, coastal

vegetation. The Norman course is broad-shouldered with long, generous fairways and several holes along the waterway. The Love course is an interesting hybrid of styles, best remembered by unique, faux castle ruins that come into play on a few holes.

The Dye course, stretching more than 7,300 yards from the back tees, has a little bit of everything to challenge the best of golfers. Water hazards aren't needed—the course is plenty tough without many of them. Instead, deep, contoured bunkers and lush centipede and zoysia rough guard fairways and greens.

### Barefoot Resort

(843) 399-7573, (888) 557-6226

72 holes – Fazio, par 71; Norman, par 72; Love, par 72; Dye, par 72

Architects: Tom Fazio, Greg Norman, Davis Love III and Pete Dye

Fazio Yardage: Platinum 6,834; Black 6,350; White 5,678; Gold 4,820

Norman Yardage: Platinum 7,035; Black 6,487; White 5,718; Gold 4,953

Love Yardage: Platinum 7,047; Black 6,542; White 6,055; Gold 5,346

Dye Yardage: Tournament 7,343; Championship 6,634;

Member 6,005; Forward 5,021

Fazio's course has a definite South Carolina Lowcountry feel. A few thousand live oaks and pines native to the coastline were brought in to add to the wild nature of the layout, which has few large trees in play. Waste areas, bunkers, lakes and wetlands test golfers of all skill levels. Like most Fazio layouts, the subtle, artistic shaping of the fairways is somewhat soothing to golfers.

Norman probably got more spectacular land than the other three designers. A handful of holes on the back nine extend along the bank of the waterway. With its broad fairways and spacious greens, the course seems to reflect the swashbuckling personality of the Shark. The layout allows players to hit their drivers and take calculated gambles. The waterway holes are spectacular and fun to play.

The Love course has generated a surprising amount of attention, considering the competition it faces from sister offerings from higher-pedigreed designers. Love obviously had a lot of fun designing this course. In addition to building faux castle ruins and debris visible on several holes, he crafted a good mixture of long and short holes.

The Fazio, Norman and Love layouts share the same luxury clubhouse, which opened in the summer of 2001. Packages are available for players wishing to play more than one of the four courses.

## Grande Dunes

Grande Dunes opened its first course early in 2001 to rave reviews. The development, which extends from beachfront property near the famous Dunes Golf and Beach Club across the waterway via a stunning, Mediterranean-style bridge, includes some of the highest-priced homesites on the S.C. coast. The first of two golf courses, designed by former Robert Trent Jones assistant Roger Rulewich, blends well with the posh resort atmosphere. The second course is to be private.

At Grande Dunes, Rulewich sculpted a course with a spectacular, yet classic, flair. Everything from the nicely contoured, almost flaw-

lessly manicured fairways to the specious, undulating greens and panoramic views along the waterway, has a luxurious flavor and elegance. The course gives the impression that expense has been spared nowhere in its creation. The course's setting on high ground above the waterway adds to the layout's powerful mystique.

The waterway is in play on a handful of holes, making a dramatic appearance at No. 8, then serving as the left boundary on Nos. 9 and 10, a pair of par-4s. Players get an opportunity to challenge the waterway on the right at No. 15, another long par-4 hole. The finish really begins at No. 16, a 610-yard monster playing away from the waterway.

Grande Dunes is more than just a round of golf, it's a truly unique experience on the Grand Strand. The opulent clubhouse offers a comfortable grill room and formal dining for post-round celebrations. The development will have several top amenities, including a marina, gourmet market, cafes, boutiques and specialty shops.

Together, Barefoot Resort and Grande Dunes are opening an upscale frontier on the Grand Strand. What was only wasteland on the wrong side of the waterway a few years ago has quickly become home to five of the best golf courses in one of the country's top golf destinations.

### Grande Dunes

(843) 449-7070, (888) 886-8877

18 holes – par 72

**Yardage:** Gold 7,618; Black 7,195;

White 6,737; Silver 5,900; Red 5,353

**Architect:** Roger Rulewich

**Signature Hole:** par-3 No. 8 - Breathtaking downhill approach to green sitting on a rise just above the Intracoastal Waterway.

